open wide our hearts

the enduring call to love *a pastoral letter against racism*

Grade 2 Activity: What Makes a Person

Doctrinal elements:

Man's Vocation: Life in the Spirit

The Dignity of the Human Person

- By our actions we show whether or not we are living to the fullest perfection of our dignity and goodness. (**CCC 1700**)
- God has given us free choice—which means we can do bad things as well as good things. (**CCC 1730-32**)
- The Bible and the Church teach us to know what is right and wrong. (**CCC 1785**)

The Human Community:

- Love of neighbor is inseparable from love of God. (**CCC 1878**)

God's Salvation: Law and Grace

- Jesus gives us a new commandment to love one another as he has loved us. (**CCC 1970, 1972, 1985**)

Objectives

Students should be able to:

1. Identify as central to the Gospel Jesus' teaching to love others.
2. Recognize the inherent dignity of each person.
3. Celebrate the wonderful diversity of God's family.
4. Know that racist ideas and prejudice are harmful to the Body of Christ.

Quotes from *Open Wide our Hearts*

- "Every racist act – every such comment, every joke, every disparaging look as a reaction to the color of skin, ethnicity, or place of origin – is a failure to acknowledge another person as a brother or sister, created in the image of God. In these and in many other such acts, the sin of racism persists in our lives, in our country and in our world."

- "Racism directly places brother and sister against each other, violating the dignity inherent in each person."

- "Overcoming racism is a demand of justice, but because Christian love transcends justice, the end of racism will mean that our community will bear fruit beyond simply the fair treatment of all. After all, 'Within [the human] family,' as St. John Paul II said, 'each people preserves and expresses its own identity and enriches others with its gifts of culture' (John Paul II, Address at the Meeting with the Native Peoples of the Americas, September 14, 1987, no. 4)."

- "We need to continue to educate ourselves and our people about the great cultural diversity within our Church."

Instructions for the Lesson

Begin with this prayer:

Thank You for Creating the Children of the World

Loving Father,

Thank you for creating
all the children of the world, who
live in many lands,
have many traditions, and
speak many languages.

Help me know that
you made each of your children unique
and you love each of them.

Help me to be a friend
to children who are different from me,
for we are all part of your family!

Amen.

*"Every racist act. . .
is a failure to acknowledge another person as a brother or sister, created in the image of God."*

– *U.S. bishops,* Open Wide Our Hearts

Next, talk with the students about what makes someone a person.

- Begin by listing on a piece of butcher block paper or the whiteboard some of their "favorite" people.
- Ask them each to draw a picture of their favorite person. You could also show pictures of famous people.
- Ask the students, "What makes a person, a person?"

After some discussion about what makes a person, teach the students that we believe God creates every person in the image of God.

- This makes people very special. Every person has value and dignity because they are made in God's image and loved by God.
- This makes every one of us and every person in the world very special.
- Ask the students if they can imagine that God loves every person in the world.

Now, talk about how it feels when someone doesn't treat you with dignity or respect.

- Have you ever felt like someone wasn't listening to you?
- Or someone made you feel like you weren't very important?
- What does that feel like?

Some people do not recognize the dignity of others whose culture or color of skin is different from their own. When someone doesn't recognize our dignity because of our skin color, or because our family celebrates events or holidays differently, or comes from a different place in the country or the world, that person is wrong.

Ask the students to work together to make a list of five ways that they can show someone that they respect their human dignity. Ask the students to report their lists to the whole class.

Finally, pose this scenario:

Pretend you are sitting at lunch with your friend, Joseph. Joseph is really excited because his mom made his very favorite thing for dinner last night. (Ask: what is your favorite thing to have for dinner?)

Joseph has some of his favorite food for lunch that day. You've never tried what Joseph has for lunch. It looks totally different than what you have in your lunch today. When the other kids see what Joseph has for lunch, they start making fun of it.

Joseph looks really sad and moves to a different seat farther down the table.

- What do you think you could do to make Joe feel better?
- What would you say to the other kids?

Summary and Final Activity:

Read a quote from the Pastoral Letter like this one: "Every racist act – every such comment, every joke, every disparaging look as a reaction to the color of skin, ethnicity, or place of origin – is a failure to acknowledge another person as a brother or sister, created in the image of God. In

these and in many other such acts, the sin of racism persists in our lives, in our country and in our world." Invite students to share what they've learned with their families.

To talk about at home:

- What's one important characteristic of your family? What do you love about how your family does things?
- How can you celebrate or learn about a culture different from your own?
- What can you do to let someone know you know how special he or she is?

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